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AUTHOR McNemar, Donald W.
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ABSTRACT

An alliance of the librarian and the researcher is essential to the success of modern scholarship. We are passing through a period of major change which will produce very different university libraries in the future. Academic librarians must provide the leadership to insure that researchers join in their budget fights: that researchers are engaging in their difficult decisions about priorities: and that librarians use the new technological capabilities, not as an opportunity to demonstrate the conservatisms of scholars, but rather as a unique learning situation. (Author/RAA)

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THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN

Panel on "The role of the Academic Librarian".

ALA Conference, New York City, July 1, 1980

Presentation by

Donald W. McNemar

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PANEL ON

"THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN"

THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN

A.L.A. CONFERENCE
JULY 1, 1980
NEW YORK CITY

DONALD W. MCNEMAR
ASSOCIATE DEAN OF
FACULTY FOR THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

I AM DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN WITH YOU TODAY. AT PRESENT, I AM TEACHING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSES, PURSUING RESEARCH ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE UNITED NATIONS, AND SERVING AS ASSOCIATE DEAN OF THE FACULTY FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AT DARTMOUTH. I AM INVOLVED IN TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND ADMINISTRATION, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS MY REMARKS TODAY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY.

NATURALLY, I WONDERED WHAT QUALIFICATIONS I HAD WHICH MIGHT ENTITLE ME TO SPEAK WITH LIBRARIANS TODAY. IN MY PAST I HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF A NUMBER OF OVERDUE BOOKS, BUT I ASSUME THAT DOES NOT DISTINGUISH ME FROM MOST FACULTY. I HAD TO CONCLUDE THAT MY PRIME PREPARATION WAS A LONG CAREER OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES TARGETED AT THE LIBRARY.

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO DARTMOUTH I USED MY NEW PREROGATIVE OF PROPOSING THAT THE LIBRARY ORDER A NEW BOOK -- AN ANTHOLOGY OF 13 ARTICLES. MY PROPOSED ORDER WAS REJECTED. NOT WISHING TO APPEAR A FAILURE, I PURSUED THE MATTER. I WAS TOLD THAT SINCE THE LIBRARY WOULD HAVE

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THOSE 13 ARTICLES IN THEIR ORIGINAL SOURCES, THEY WOULD NOT BUY THE NEWLY PUBLISHED ANTHOLOGY. DESPITE MY COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROBABILITIES OF AN UNDERGRADUATE FINDING THOSE 13 SOURCES, I WAS INFORMED THAT "THIS WAS 'POLICY' MADE AT THE 'HIGHEST LEVEL'" AND THAT WAS THE END OF IT.

I GAVE UP UNTIL, I WENT TO THE MONTHLY SALE OF DISCARDED BOOKS AND DISCOVERED THE PRECISE BOOK I HAD BEEN TRYING TO GET THE LIBRARY TO PURCHASE. THIS GOADED ME INTO SUBVERSION. I EVENTUALLY FOUND THE LOOPHOLE AT THE RESERVE DESK. BECAUSE THE INSTITUTION IS A TEACHING INSTITUTION, THE LIBRARY BUYS BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR AVAILABILITY AT THE RESERVE DESK, -- THEN AFTER THE TERM THESE BOOKS REVERT TO THE REGULAR COLLECTION. I HAD IT! EACH TERM I SIMPLY LIST ON MY COURSE SYLLABI ALL OF THE BOOKS I WANTED THE LIBRARY TO ORDER, AND THROUGH THE RESERVE DESK THEY ENTER THE COLLECTION.

NOW I ASSUME THIS INVITATION TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY IS PART OF A LIBRARY CONSPIRACY TO GET ME TO STOP "SUBVERTING POLICY!" WELL, IT HAS WORKED. I HAVE CUT MY RESERVE LIST IN HALF FOR FALL TERM, THERE ARE NOW ONLY 98 BOOKS ON THE LIST.

FOCUSING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN AND THE RESEARCH, THIS MUST NECESSARILY BE ONE OF ALLIANCE. THE LIBRARIAN AND THE SCHOLAR ARE ENGAGED IN A COMMON TASK -- THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH BY ANALYZING THE PAST IN ORDER TO ENLIGHTEN THE FUTURE. THE COLLEGE OR THE UNIVERSITY PROVIDES THE SETTING WHERE THE LIBRARIAN AND RESEARCHER PURSUE TRUTH WITHIN A COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS. BOTH THE LIBRARIAN AND THE RESEARCHER ARE INTEGRAL TO THE

PROCESS; BUT EACH HAS DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS. THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN FUNCTIONS 1)AS THE GUARDIAN, RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING SOURCES, AND 2) AS THE FACILITATOR RESPONSIBLE FOR MAXIMIZING THE USE OF THESE SOURCES. THE RESEARCHER ON THE OTHER HAND CARRIES RESPONSIBILITIES 1) AS ANALYZER OF THE DATA AND 2) AS PRESENTER OF THE CONCLUSIONS TO SCHOLARS AND THE PUBLIC. BOTH INDIVIDUALS MUST WORK COOPERATIVELY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE RESEACH GOALS. HOWEVER, LET ME HASTEN TO ADD THAT THIS ALLIANCE, LIKE ANY ALLIANCE, CAN BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO TENSIONS AND DIFFICULTIES. GIVEN THE NECESSITY FOR COOPERATION, AND THE POTENTIAL FOR DIFFICULTIES, HOW CAN WE MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS ALLIANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY?

WE UNDERTAKE THIS DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN AT A TIME OF RAPID CHANGE AND MAJOR TRANSITION FOR THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. WE MAY EMERGE FROM THE CURRENT CHANGES WITH THE ALLIANCE IN A STATE OF NEAR DISASTER OR WE MAY EMERGE WITH A GREAT LEAP FORWARD IN OUR CAPABILITY FOR COOPERATIVE RESEARCH. THIS TRANSITION IS CHARACTERIZED BY: 1) THE EXPLOSION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS; 2) THE IMPOSITION OF SEVERE BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, AND 3) THE RAPID EXPANSION OF TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES.

THE MATERIALS WHICH THE LIBRARIAN AND THE RESEARCHER DEAL WITH HAVE EXPANDED TREMENDOUSLY IN RECENT TIMES. NEW PUBLICATIONS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS ARE APPEARING AT A RAPID RATE. THE GOVERNMENT IS PRODUCING EVER INCREASING AMOUNTS OF DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS, AS WELL AS DIVULGING

TREMENDOUS NUMBERS OF OLD MATERIAL UNDER SUCH PROVISIONS AS THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. THE GREATLY EXPANDED NUMBER OF SCHOLARS, WHO ARE PUBLISHING AND PERISHING--TODAY, HAS RESULTED IN A PHENOMENAL INCREASE IN SOURCES. THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH RATE OF SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS IS UNDERSTANDABLE WHEN WE REALIZE THAT OF ALL THE SCIENTISTS WHO EVER LIVED, 90 PER CENT ARE ALIVE AND PUBLISHING TODAY!

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE JUST THIS EXPLOSION, BUT THE SECOND REALITY TODAY IS THE IMPOSITION OF SEVERE BUDGET CONSTRAINTS ON LIBRARIANS. THE PRICE OF MONOGRAPHS AND JOURNALS HAS RISEN SHOCKINGLY, SO THAT JUST TO MAINTAIN PREVIOUS LEVELS OF PERIODICAL SUBSCRIPTIONS, LIBRARIES ARE PUTTING MORE AND MORE OF A PERCENTAGE OF THEIR BUDGETS INTO THE PERIODICAL COLLECTION. UNIVERSITIES, CONFRONTED WITH LIMITED BUDGETS AND DECLINING ENROLLMENTS, HAVE SEVERELY RESTRICTED RESOURCES FOR THEIR LIBRARIES. FIRST RATE COLLECTIONS IN ALL FIELDS AND SELF-SUFFICIENT COLLECTIONS ARE A THING OF THE PAST FOR MOST UNIVERSITIES. THE RESEARCHER FACES THE REALITY THAT LIBRARIES WILL SIMPLY NOT HAVE THE MAGNIFICANT RANGE OF MATERIALS THEY HAVE HAD IN THE PAST. THE LIBRARIAN FACES THE TASK OF CHOOSING WISELY ABOUT THE USE OF LIMITED RESOURCES IN ACQUIRING AND MAINTAINING COLLECTIONS.

THE THIRD FORCE CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONTEMPORARY TRANSITION IS THE TREMENDOUS CHANGE IN TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES. SUCH DEVELOPMENTS AS THE ON-LINE CATALOG, COMPUTER-BASED BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHES NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR NATIONAL PERIODICAL CENTERS, AND ON-DEMAND PUBLISHING -- ALL SUGGEST A TREMENDOUS RANGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES.

NEW CAPABILITIES WILL HELP RESPOND TO INCREASED MATERIALS AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS THROUGH COOPERATIVE ACQUISITION AND USE OF MATERIALS; BUT THE LIBRARY THE RESEARCHER USES IN THE FUTURE WILL BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE PAST.

THE FACT THAT LIBRARIES ARE CURRENTLY IN THE MIDST OF A MAJOR TRANSITION MEANS THAT LIBRARIANS AND SCHOLARS WILL MAKE IMPORTANT POLICY CHOICES. I SUSPECT THESE WILL FURTHER TEST THE SHAKY ALLINACE BETWEEN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN AND THE SCHOLARLY RESEARCHER. I WOULD LIKE TO NOTE BRIEFLY SOME QUALITIES OF THE RESEARCHER BEFORE COMMENTING ON STRATEGIES WHICH MAY BE ESSENTIAL TO INSURE THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF THIS ALLIANCE.

WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE RESEARCHER IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY, WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF THIS INDIVIDUAL? THE "EXPERT" HAS BEEN DEFINED AS "A PERSON WHO KNOWS MORE AND MORE ABOUT LESS AND LESS." IN MANY OF OUR UNIVERSITIES, THIS DESCRIBES THE DEDICATED SCHOLAR WHO BECOMES ESPECIALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE IN HIS OR HER SPECIALTY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR BATTLES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS OF THE WRITINGS OF AN OBSCURE 19TH CENTURY CHINESE POET. WHEN SUCH DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS UNDERTAKE FURHTER RESEARCH AND COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN THEY TEND TO ASSUME THAT ALL MONOGRAPHS, THEIR FAVORITE COLLECTIONS, AND ESSENTIAL PERIODICALS WILL BE READILY AVAILABLE, WHEN THEY DECIDE THEY WANT THEM. IN SHORT, THEY TAKE THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN FOR GRANTED. SECONDLY, THESE INDIVIDUALS TEND TO BE A BIT CONSERVATIVE. THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENQUIRY ON SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION FOUND THAT THE SCHOLARS SURVEYED TENDED TO STRESS THE ADEQUACY OF THEIR LOCAL COLLECTIONS AND DISPLAYED A LACK OF INTEREST IN BIBLIOGRAPHIC SERVICES.

YOUNGER SCHOLARS TENDED TO BE A BIT MORE "PROGRESSIVE" ABOUT NEW TRENDS IN THE LIBRARY FIELD, BUT IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT THE "OLD CONSERVATISM" WON'T SET IN AFTER THEY ARE TENURED. AS ONE REACHES THE PINNACLE OF ONE'S RESEARCH CAREER, PEOPLE THINK THAT THE WAY THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE THINGS MUST BE THE RIGHT WAY, AND ARE NOT PARTICULARLY OPEN TO CHANGE--EITHER IN THEIR VIEWS OF THEIR SUBJECT OR THE WAY THEY FIND THEIR SOURCES IN THE LIBRARY.

THIRDLY, RESEARCHERS MAINTAIN SOME STEREOTYPIC PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARIANS WHICH PRODUCE SOME SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE LIBRARIAN AS AN ALLIANCE PARTNER. RATHER THAN VIEWING LIBRARIANS AS FELLOW SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS TEND TO THINK THAT SOME LIBRARIANS TAKE THEIR ROLE AS "GUARDIAN" MUCH TOO SERIOUSLY WHILE UNDERPLAYING THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AS "FACILITATOR" FOR THE USE OF COLLECTIONS. FURTHERMORE, SOME RESEARCHERS SUSPECT THAT SUCH MODERN CHANGES AND INVENTIONS AS MICROFICHE, AACR 2, AND COMPUTER SEARCHES ARE DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO CONFOUND AND HINDER THE RESEARCHER. IN SHORT, THE ALLIANCE I DESCRIBED MUST OVERCOME SOME SUSPICION ON THE PART OF THE PARTNERS.

FINALLY, THERE IS A TINGE OF ARROGANCE THAT OFTEN GOES WITH SUCCESS AS A SCHOLAR. IN SHORT, I DO NOT ENVY YOUR TASK IN WORKING DAILY WITH THESE CONSERVATIVE, ARROGANT, SUSPICIOUS AND UNGRATEFUL SCHOLARS. YET AT THE SAME TIME YOU MUST BE AWARE OF THESE QUALITIES AS WE TALK ABOUT MOVING THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION SUCCESSFULLY.

GIVEN THIS TRANSITION CONTEXT, AND THE QUALITIES OF SCHOLARS, WHAT STRATEGIES MAY BE IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN? I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE REQUIRE: 1) UNITY IN BUDGET BATTLES; 2) JOINT ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES; AND 3) REEDUCATION OF RESEARCHERS BY THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS.

THE BUDGET MAY BECOME THE DOWNFALL OF THE ALLIANCE OR A NEW ARENA FOR INCREASED COOPERATION TO EXPAND THE PIE. THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN FIGHTING FOR BUDGET RESOURCES TO INSURE THAT THE COLLECTIONS ARE AVAILABLE AND ORGANIZED FOR EFFECTIVE USE BY RESEARCHERS. HOWEVER, IN ANY UNIVERSITY SETTING THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FACULTY, IN PURSUIT OF THEIR OWN INTEREST IN INCREASED NUMBERS OF FACULTY AND INCREASED SALARIES, MAY COME TO VIEW THE LIBRARY IN THE SAME WAY THEY VIEW THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM THESE DAYS--AS TAKING AN INORDINATE SHARE OF THE UNIVERSITY FUNDS. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE TWO GROUPS RECOGNIZE THEIR COMMON INTEREST IN MAINTAINING THE LIBRARY RESOURCES. THEY MUST PURSUE CREATIVE EFFORTS, NOT ONLY IN DEFENDING THEIR BUDGET TO THE BOARD OR THE LEGISLATURE, BUT ALSO IN GENERATING NEW RESOURCES THROUGH GRANT PROPOSALS DEVELOPED JOINTLY BY SCHOLARS AND LIBRARIANS TO WIN OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBRARY.

SECONDLY, IMPORTANT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THESE BE DECIDED JOINTLY BY THE LIBRARIANS AND THE FACULTY. I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT ENGAGING THE FACULTY IN THE BOOK ORDERING PROCESS. WHICH COLLECTIONS WILL BE ELIMINATED?

How will the branch libraries be closed? How will deteriorating holdings be preserved? Whose serials will be eliminated? These decisions will be tough and it is essential that researchers and teachers, as well as librarians and administrators, be involved in setting these priorities. If the decision is made that one library will specialize in a particular area in cooperation with another in sharing collections, the researchers on campus must be involved in these decisions rather than later confronted by them. Not only might this reduce some of the inevitable flak the librarian will take, but the researcher may actually have relevant wisdom and insights to share. Effectively engaging the faculty in decisions will, of course, be time consuming, but these decisions are so far reaching that they must be made jointly.

Finally, this period of transition will create extraordinary opportunities for the librarian to reeducate the researcher. While much of the discussion about learning and teaching on the part of the librarians has focused on students, this period of transition will bring important opportunities for the librarian to assist the scholar in learning new ways of conducting research. Obviously, this will be a difficult task given the conservatism and the arrogance I described. As the researcher undertakes his work using traditional methods and suddenly discovers the catalog is now computerized and the best literature searches are data-based, it will be the librarian who is in a position to present these innovations and teach the faculty about their use.

WE MUST EXPECT GREAT RESISTANCE FROM RESEARCHERS TO THESE NEW OPPORTUNITIES; YET THESE INNOVATIONS ARE ECONOMIC NECESSITIES WITH GREAT POTENTIAL. THE LIBRARIAN MUST CONVINCE THE RESEARCHER THAT HIS OR HER WORK WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED BY THESE NEW OPPORTUNITIES. THE SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTION OF INNOVATIONS WILL COME--NOT THROUGH THE FERVENT ADVOCACY OF THE LIBRARIAN, BUT RATHER THROUGH THE DISCOVERY BY THE RESEARCHER, WITH THE PATIENT ASSISTANCE OF THE LIBRARIAN, THAT THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH IS FURTHERED WITH THESE NEW CAPABILITIES.

IN CONCLUSION, THE ALLIANCE OF THE LIBRARIAN AND THE RESEARCHER IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP. WE ARE PASSING THROUGH A PERIOD OF MAJOR CHANGE WHICH WILL PRODUCE VERY DIFFERENT UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN THE FUTURE. THESE CHANGES COULD PRODUCE GREAT RESISTANCE OR GREAT COOPERATION FROM RESEARCHERS. THIS WILL BE A PERIOD OF TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY. ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS MUST PROVIDE THE LEADERSHIP TO INSURE: THAT RESEARCHERS JOIN IN THEIR BUDGET FIGHTS; THAT RESEARCHERS ARE ENGAGED IN THEIR DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES, AND THAT LIBRARIANS USE THE NEW TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES, NOT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE CONSERVATISM OF THE SCHOLARS, BUR RATHER AS A UNIQUE LEARNING SITUATION. WITH THESE STRATEGIES THE ALLIANCE OF THE RESEARCHER AND THE LIBRARIAN CAN CONTRIBUTE IMPORTANTLY TO THE SCHOLARSHIP OF THE FUTURE.